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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 2 November 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. GANEV (Bulgaria)

- Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [79]

  (a) Report of the Conference

  (b) Report of the Secretary-General

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE (A/CONF.151/26, vols.I-IV and vol.II/Corr.1)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/598 and Add.1);

The PRESIDENT: As members will recall, at its 3rd plenary meeting, the General Assembly decided that the debate on agenda item 79 would be held directly in plenary meeting, on the understanding that action on the item would be taken in the Second Committee.

The report of the Secretary-General on the institutional arrangements to follow-up on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development has been circulated in document A/47/598 and Add.1. The report of the Conference has been issued as document A/CONF.151/26, volumes I to IV.

I should like to inform the Assembly that I have received a letter dated 30 October 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Denmark on behalf of the Western European and other States requesting that the Assembly hear in plenary meeting statements by the Observers of the Holy See and Switzerland during the debate on agenda item 79.

Members will recall that, in accordance with the established practice of the General Assembly, observer non-Member States may normally make statements only in the Main Committees. However, following consultations, and taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly take a decision to hear the Observers of the Holy See and Switzerland in the course of the debate in plenary meeting on this agenda item. I take it that there is no objection to this proposal.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed this afternoon at 5 p.m. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names as soon as possible.

I call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have looked forward to the opening of this debate. It is an occasion to share with you my thinking on the United Nations as an agent of development. The report of the Conference on Environment and Development (A/CONF.151/26, Vol.I-IV), ranging so widely over economic and social questions, gives me my platform. I shall also touch upon matters relating directly to the follow-up of that Conference, which is now in your hands.

In my first year of office, I have had the privilege of participating in three important United Nations events dealing with global development: first, the Cartagena Conference on Trade and Development; secondly, the Rio Conference on Environment and Development; and, thirdly, the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). I have also taken part in the work of regional commissions in Asia and in Europe.

My evaluation of these events - recently summed up in my annual report on the work of the Organization (A/47/1) has reinforced my conviction of the potential of this instutition. The Rio Earth Summit was an example of the capacity of the United Nations to mobilize political, public and instutitional energies around key issues of global development. Only the United Nations could have achieved it; its potential is unique.

(The Secretary-General)

The challenge after Rio is to maintain the momentum of commitment to sustainable development, to transform it into policies and practice, and to give it effective and coordinated institutional support.

My conviction is sustained by my sense of the opportunity for constructive action created by the end of the cold war. We can now work for an era of North-South cooperation that is not distorted by ideological and political East-West tensions. Peace and prosperity are indivisible, but they are threatened by gross inequalities within and between nations. Balanced planetary development is not only an enlightened aim; it is a foundation for the enduring progress of all societies. Development cooperation must be carried forward on this basis, in parallel with technical and financial support to help the former planned economies in their transition.

This new era brings new intellectual and political challenges. While the command economy is discredited, the market economy has yet to achieve its potential. The market is an instrument of efficiency and of material growth. But development is more than growth; it is the improvement of human well-being. Economic growth is the mainspring of development, but its thrust must be guided by equity, justice and social and ecological responsibility if development is to endure. This, in my view, is the meaning behind sustainable development.

This is the ground for the new contest of ideas. Many questions are open in democratic political discourse. Even in richer market economies, social tensions and environmental degradation pose serious problems of governance. In countries everywhere, the policies to deal simultaneously with unemployment, inflation, debt and trade imbalances have proved elusive.

(The Secretary-General)

In the years of bipolar confrontation, it was easy to fall back on stereotypes. These are now irrelevant. Democracy and the market economy must not become mere slogans. The new convergence on these forms brings with it an obligation to engage in a sober analysis of successes and failures in orienting market forces in different national conditions towards democratically determined goals. It requires a renewed commitment to support developing countries in their efforts to build democratic, market-oriented societies. It requires a fresh look at the international environment in which such societies can flourish.

This debate on the content of democratic governance and development, national and international, sets the context for a redefinition of the role of the United Nations in these spheres. This Organization must be a major source of ideas in this debate. It must be faithful to its mission while adapting to evolving needs. Its perspective must be global, seeking out the common interests of the world community. It must be centred on people, their rights and their talents. It must highlight the unspoken concerns of the poor and the needs of future generations.

From such a perspective, the United Nations must bring the major issues to the Member States' attention. In its areas of competence, it must help them to come to grips with the problems of these times. Member States, for their part, must work to keep alive the consensus that is unfolding from the special session of the General Assembly, through Cartagena and Rio, to the Economic and Social Council. This consensus is a source of guidance and commitment to policy creation and institutional renewal.

I am convinced that this Organization can meet the twin challenges of substance and structure. The intellectual and managerial task is vast. But

(The Secretary-General)

we are guided by the genius of the Charter, so rich, so flexible, and yet so straightforward in its provisions for international economic and social cooperation.

This Organization must put its development objectives on a par with its political and security commitments. Intergovernmental bodies must promote policy coherence and programme coordination. And different types of programme activities, particularly analytical and operational activities, must support and reinforce each other.

Intergovernmental reform and Secretariat reform are two sides of the same coin. Member States have their share of responsibility in this joint venture. It is for them to adopt consistent positions and take decisions on the reform of intergovernmental structures, and for me only to urge expeditious action and to advise on its content.

I set great store on the continuing reform of the Economic and Social Council. I want to see it live up to its central responsibilities under the Charter. The Council, functioning intersessionally as needed, should address development issues that affect international security and bring them to the attention of the Security Council. Integrated oversight is needed, through the Economic and Social Council, of the governance and priorities of all funding programmes for development operations, including the amount and predictability of their financing. The Commission on Sustainable Development should bolster the Council's efforts to promote coherence and coordination.

While the Council must respond to a diversity of interests among Member States, the logic of priority-setting must lead to thinning the undergrowth of subsidiary bodies. There are now some 40 bodies reporting directly to the Economic and Social Council. Many have their own subsidiaries, bringing the

(The Secretary-General)

total number of expert and intergovernmental committees in the economic and social field close to 200. While there were, I am sure, valid technical, substantive reasons for their creation, how many Governments can truly cope with such an extensive machinery? What is the limit beyond which such a machinery becomes a burden, rather than a source of useful inputs for national Governments and international policy-making? I trust that, in the context of the current debate on the reform of the intergovernmental machinery, there will be the necessary political will to address these questions squarely.

(The Secretary-General)

These are matters for decision by Member States. But a contribution can be made by improvements in the functioning of the Secretariat. A more effective Secretariat can provide better service to Member States and to the intergovernmental machinery. It can also stimulate and facilitate the reform of that machinery. The process of streamlining intergovernmental structures should not hold up Secretariat reform. A revamped Secretariat can better serve the existing machinery while awaiting the new.

The Secretariat should not be subdivided by its legislative history or by the geography of the intergovernmental bodies it serves. All staff, whether in a department, a programme or a fund, must be unified under the authority of the Secretary-General. We must motivate, mobilize and integrate all analytical and operational capacities of the Secretariat at Headquarters and in the field. Such steps will enable the Secretariat to exercise clearer leadership in the United Nations system and provide stronger support for the needs of Member States.

In reviewing options for further reform of the Secretariat in the economic, social and environmental areas, I have personally sought advice from a panel of independent advisers. The stature of the panelists leaves me in no doubt as to the value of their advice, which I have been taking into account as their work proceeds. I look forward to the results of their further work in the coming weeks.

The thoughts on further restructuring that I share with the Assembly today are advanced on my own responsibility. Restructuring and streamlining the Secretariat were among my main preoccupations on taking office. They will

(The Secretary-General)

remain one of my main commitments throughout my tenure as Secretary-General. While reform has no natural stopping point, it should be concerted and systematic.

One of my key objectives is to build a unity of purpose for the economic, social and environmental sectors of the Organization. These have grown increasingly fragmented and compartmentalized. I will also take steps to strengthen linkages between those sectors and the political and humanitarian sectors of the Organization. The complex field operations in which the United Nations is increasingly engaged should practice an integrated approach to peace and development.

In earlier restructuring efforts, as in the current one, a central concern has been to ensure adequate support for the Secretary-General's managerial and coordination responsibilities in the development sphere. Different models have been advanced, each with strengths and weaknesses. My intention is to address the issue from its roots.

A prerequisite is that the Secretary-General devote the necessary time and personal attention to these responsibilities. I am committed to doing so and to obtaining the support I need in this task from all quarters of the Secretariat.

My managerial strategy will be to define clearly those tasks for development and cooperation that should be carried out by the Organization itself within the system of the specialized agencies and institutions. In the first instance I am moving to determine those functions that should be carried out here at Headquarters. I shall then proceed to decisions on a more

(The Secretary-General)

rational distribution of responsibilities between Headquarters and United Nations centres in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna. The relocation of activities should provide a clearer purpose for each of the United Nations programmes, as well as sharpening the substantive focus of each of the centres.

Clear lines of responsibility in a simpler structure, together with steps to eliminate duplication and overlapping, can go a long way towards solving the problem of coordination. This can be my main contribution.

Bearing in mind these considerations and the experience gained from the first phase of restructuring, I see three clusters of economic, social and environmental functions for Headquarters in New York. While there are different options for translating these sets of functions into institutional structures, this clustering necessarily entails a significant decentralisation of activities away from Headquarters. At the same time, there may be a need for some redeployment to Headquarters.

The first cluster includes coordination and substantive support for the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Sustainable Development. The rationale for linking these two responsibilities derives from the broad coverage of Agenda 21 and the Commission's terms of reference. Support for the Economic and Social Council will relate to its functions of policy coordination and governance of operational activities. Support for the Commission and the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would be distinctly organized within this cluster.

(The Secretary-General)

The second cluster comprises data collection, methodology, policy analysis and the articulation of development perspectives. The Secretariat must be recognized as a centre of excellence for the analysis of development trends in all parts of the world, and of their international interactions. The proper elaboration of statistics and data - the essential foundation for economic and social analysis - is one of the riches of the United Nations. This collective asset must be preserved, strengthened and adapted to new needs. We must ensure wide access and dissemination, especially to countries with insufficient national capacities.

The third cluster involves technical cooperation. This should be carried out from Headquarters only where there is a clear comparative advantage in relation to the rest of the United Nations and the system as a whole. It should focus on programmes that cut across regions and sectors, and on the least developed countries and those requiring special assistance programmes.

(The Secretary-General)

The central structures should also include a capacity to stimulate exchanges with sources of ideas and action proposals outside the United Nations and the governmental sphere. Intellectual communities, citizens' associations and the corporate sector all have valuable contributions to make. This was demonstrated by UNCED. The United Nations must be open to the democratic forces of civil society, without losing its intergovernmental character.

Striking the right balance between Headquarters and other centres, on the one hand, and regional structures, on the other, is a key question. I believe that the balance has shifted too much to the centre. It is time to breathe new life into the regional commissions. They must become truly representative of the Organization, while moving more clearly into the range of central oversight.

The strength of the regional commissions lies in their multidisciplinary reach and in their ability to mediate between global and national activities. They too must operate within a coherent institutional strategy. They too need restructuring and streamlining to fit into this strategy and to respond to the changing needs of their regions.

We need a fresh look at the distribution of analytical and operational capacities between global and regional structures. Some redeployment to the latter is likely. For example, most technical advisory services could be more effectively delivered from the regions. Such decentralization would imply greater delegation of authority, as well as measures to ensure accountability.

Turning to the national level, I am determined to improve United Nations performance in the field. Teamwork is the key. We must move quickly to a single United Nations presence that would encompass programmes under my direct

(The Secretary-General)

authority, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the World Food Programme (WFP). This combined operation would carry out an integrated strategy in each country where the Organization operates. It would be headed by a United Nations Representative, appointed by the Secretary-General, who would also be the Resident Coordinator for the United Nations system. This would strengthen the function of the Resident Coordinator, in line with the expressed request of Member States.

We have made a start with unified representation in six countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the former members of the Soviet Union. We have made progress with our colleagues in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) in an approach to common country strategies. These measures of integration need to be tested in practice and adapted in the light of experience. It is my hope that their success will make the case for the whole system to speak with one voice in the capitals of Member States.

These ideas on the clustering of Headquarters functions, decentralization and the organization of operational and field activities will need to be refined and translated into specific institutional arrangements. The further advice of the panel of experts on these questions will be of great value to my decisions.

Greater clarity and coherence will enhance the capacity of the Organization to promote coordination within the United Nations system. I stress again the importance I attach to the ACC and to my relationship, as its Chairman, with the executive heads of all of the specialized agencies and institutions of the system. I shall continue to give that role the time and attention it deserves.

(The Secretary-General)

The Committee has initiated a comprehensive analysis of its role and functioning, as well as a radical streamlining of its subsidiary machinery. This should enable the Committee to meet with new effectiveness the challenge of the times. Harnessing the capacity of the system to advance Agenda 21 is such a challenge.

The concept of sustainable development, consecrated in Rio, can become an instrument of integration, giving coherence to diverse programme activities. Agenda 21 itself offers a framework for coordinating the development activities of the whole United Nations system and for mobilizing organizations outside it.

Let me now turn to my report on the follow-up to UNCED. It contains recommendations on the functioning of the Commission on Sustainable Development and on the High-Level Advisory Body on Sustainable Development, as well as on related arrangements for inter-agency coordination and secretariat support.

In preparing this report, I followed closely the relevant recommendations in Agenda 21 and sought to remain faithful to the spirit of the agreement reached in Rio. I have already referred to the secretariat support arrangements. I shall direct my remarks now to other aspects of my report.

It seems clear that the Governments assembled at Rio intended to place the Commission at the heart of arrangements to achieve sustainable development and keep alive the spirit of the Earth Summit. The mobilization of political will, intellectual leadership and partnerships for sustainable development will provide the necessary momentum. Let me address these three elements briefly.

In mobilizing political will, the Commission starts with a significant advantage. The results of UNCED have received the explicit endorsement of

(The Secretary-General)

political leaders from all parts of the world. The Conference has produced internationally accepted guidelines for the economic, social and ecological future of our planet. This is a good beginning; we must ensure continuing political involvement in its follow-up. The Commission must be organized so that ministers will want to participate in it. One of their continuing tasks will be to define and refine the strategies and policies needed to foster sustainable development. They will also monitor and promote the financial flows, both bilateral and multilateral, needed to implement Agenda 21 and to assist developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development. High-level participation in the Commission is vital for success.

(The Secretary-General)

In exercising intellectual leadership, the Commission will build upon the conceptual breakthroughs embodied in Agenda 21. The transition to sustainability involves core issues of consumption patterns, poverty and demographic pressures. The Commission's analysis should focus on these three elements as a basis for organizing the assessment of the future evolution of Agenda 21.

Support for the intellectual leadership of the Commission will come from the eminent persons participating in the High-level Advisory Board on sustainable development. Their number must be kept relatively small - 15 or so, in my view - to maximize opportunities for effective interaction and dialogue. They will bring wisdom and insights from the sciences, business and other non-governmental sectors. I propose to concentrate available expertise in a single advisory body on environment and development, bearing in mind that the present membership of the Committee for Development Planning expires at the end of this year.

UNCED generated unprecedented public interest in many countries. This led to increased public awareness of the issues at stake. It stimulated a myriad of activities within countries and communities, notably by advocacy groups and educators. The UNCED process also stimulated important scientific and technical work by research institutions and professional organizations, and it engaged the involvement of representatives of the business community. All these non-governmental networks fed back into the Conference and enhanced its political and intellectual impact.

The work of the Commission must continue to attract the partnership of these non-governmental constituencies. This, in turn, will serve to propagate

(The Secretary-General)

the results of the Commission's work in the public dialogue on sustainable development.

UNCED involved a high degree of cooperation between all agencies and programmes of the United Nations system. A high-level, policy-oriented Commission on Sustainable Development will provide similar incentives for system-wide cooperation, especially if funding aspects are dealt with effectively.

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) established last week an Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development. Its membership for an initial two-year period will include the core group of the preceding ACC task force: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). To these I have added, with the agreement of the ACC, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Committee will be open to other members of the ACC interested in specific issues on its agenda.

This Committee will be the principal source of assistance for the ACC in discharging its new responsibilities in the follow-up to Rio. Under my chairmanship, this will be a standing item on the ACC agenda.

I assure members that my ACC colleagues are as committed as I am to meeting fully the responsibilities that UNCED has placed upon us.

(spoke in French)

Allow me to summarize the principal items in this ambitious reform, which is vital for the Organization.

(The Secretary-General)

The United Nations, as I have said, has a unique role to play, if it is able to meet the challenge of change on the dual level of ideas and institutions, and if Member States agree to accept their responsibilities, because the reform of the Secretariat and of the intergovernmental bodies depends on the agreement of Member States. Here I attribute tremendous importance to the reform of the Economic and Social Council and the rationalization of its many subsidiary bodies. The Secretary-General must therefore devote more time and personal attention to the economic and social sectors. I promise to do so and, secondly, to simplify, eliminate overlapping of duties and rationalize the distribution of responsibilities.

I recommend that the Commission on Sustainable Development have a limited number of members, if it is to function properly. We need a kind of Security Council on development issues.

The future Inter-Agency Committee and the Commission on Sustainable Development need to cooperate closely, and they must have the same secretariat. The High-level Advisory Board on sustainable development must be extremely restricted in size; its members should come from Member States, representing not only Governments, but also scientific institutions and non-governmental organizations, and, finally, the business world, which will have to deal with environmental issues.

I wish to conclude by repeating that all people - men, women and society as a whole - aspire to development and peace and to the enjoyment of fundamental rights and democracy. These fundamental values appear in the various cultural visions of human well-being: indeed, they make up the four

(The Secretary-General)

pillars of the Charter of the United Nations. They are closely interdependent, and progress in one promotes progress in the others. Unfortunately, in many cases these values regress to the point where human dignity and even human life are threatened. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I firmly intend to defend these values on all fronts and to make the Secretariat an effective instrument serving not only the purposes and principles of our Organization, but also the people that make up the United Nations.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the Rapporteur-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr. BRAHIMI (Algeria), Rapporteur-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (interpretation from Arabic): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in Rio from 3 to 14 June, may be considered, as described by its Secretary-General, Mr. Maurice Strong, at the very beginning of the preparatory process, as the Conference of the century.

This is due, first of all, to the record participation in the Conference and the high level of representation that was unprecedented in the history of multilateral diplomacy.

It is also due to the issues discussed and the nature of the areas of investigation, which sought to reconcile Man with his environment and to meet the present and future requirements of development.

It is due also to the scope of the Conference and to its impact, which is likely to affect the trends of multilateral cooperation in the twenty-first century. As a matter of fact, there has never been an intergovernmental meeting that matched the success of the Rio Conference in mobilizing so much energy, attracting so much interest and raising so many hopes.

This must have been due to the unprecedented gravity of the threats arising from the many and varied breaches committed against the fundamental ecological balances.

Consequently, there has never been such a clear manifestation of the international will of all rations, rich and poor, large and small, to work together in facing up to and dealing with all the phenomena that lead to the deterioration of the environment.

(Mr. Brahimi,
Rapporteur-General, UNCED)

The United Nations has never been in a better position to discharge the tasks entrusted to it by the founding fathers, pursuant to the pertinent provisions of its constituent Charter.

A great deal of the credit for the success of this undertaking lies with the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who, with his vision and political courage, did inject decisive momentum into the work of the Conference itself and into the Preparatory Committee. This has been clearly evidenced once again by his highly enlightening and instructive introductory statement here today as we begin our discussion. He has shown us the path we should take toward the completion of the enterprise started at Rio de Janeiro. Our warmest thanks go to him.

The other indefatigable architect of the successful Earth Summit meeting is unquestionably its Secretary-General, Mr. Maurice Strong. We wish to pay him a warm and well-deserved tribute, and to extend to him, once again, our gratitude.

The success of the Rio Conference would not have been possible without the outstanding contribution made by the Chairman of the Main Committee, Ambassador Tommy Koh. Thanks to his own brilliance and his unstinting and unremitting efforts over a two-year period, together with the Chairmen of the three Working Groups and the various coordinators, he ensured the successful completion of the Preparatory Committee's work.

Likewise, the excellent facilities provided by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Brazil, as well as the highly professional services of Mr. Miles Stoby and his excellent team, greatly contributed to the success of the Rio de Janeiro Conference.

(Mr. Brahimi,
Rapporteur-General, UNCED)

The same must be said of the contribution - particularly significant because of the unprecedented level of participation in the Conference - of all the unofficial sectors, especially the community of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). That contribution paved the way for an expansion of mutually advantageous cooperation, whose outlines are in the documents that embodied the results of the Conference.

In concluding its work, the Earth Summit meeting adopted, first, the Rio de Janeiro Declaration on Environment and Development, the premises of a real Earth Charter; secondly, an ambitious programme of action, entitled Agenda 21, covering no fewer than 115 areas of activity; and thirdly, a statement of non-legally binding, but authoritative principles, on the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

The Earth Summit meeting also offered the opportunity, in parallel with its regular work, for the holding of signing ceremonies for the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Each of them has been signed, to date, by 153 countries.

The Rio de Janeiro Declaration, which articulated the relationship between the environment and development, served in a timely fashion to complement and build upon the principles contained in the Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment and to prepare the ground for what the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Mr. Maurice Strong have both described as an Earth Charter, which might be adopted on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

(Mr. Brahimi,
Rapporteur-General, UNCED)

The programme of action, entitled Agenda 21, sets out to provide the basis for a new global partnership for sustainable development in an increasingly interdependent world.

Having been established on a solid foundation of common interests, mutual needs and the shared but differentiated responsibilities of States, that programme embodies a new concept of North-South cooperation, capable, we believe, of giving birth to the sort of global partnership to which we all aspire after.

However, if such a global partnership is to materialize, the Agenda 21 programmes of action must be translated into practical measures on the ground with the aim of promoting intersectoral cooperation amongst all the key actor societies and governments. This is where Agenda 21 is unique. Its uniqueness stems from the fact that it parts company with traditional patterns of multilateral cooperation, in so far as it is aimed at governments, agencies, organizations, programmes of the United Nations system, other governmental and non-governmental organizations, groups, associations and to public opinion at large, all of which are called upon to participate fully and effectively, at all levels, in its implementation. The programmes in Agenda 21 are all centred on a set of issues within a coordinated strategy aimed at bringing about a global transition towards sustainable development.

(Mr. Brahimi,
Rapporteur-General, UNCED)

In adopting Agenda 21, the governments of the industrialized countries have reaffirmed, among other things, their commitment to achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national products allocated to official development assistance. Furthermore, they stressed the need to find lasting solutions to the debt problem, especially in the case of low- and middle-income countries. In adopting Agenda 21, the Rio Conference also recommended that the structure and the procedures of the Global Environment Fund should be modified so as to expand its scope and so as to give developing countries a more important role in the decision-making process.

At Rio, it was also decided that governments should promote and fund access for developing countries to environmentally sound technologies, including on a concessionary and preferential basis.

In the domain of desertification, a very important decision was taken whereby the present session of the General Assembly would be asked to set up an intergovernmental negotiating committee to draft an international convention to combat desertification, particularly in Africa.

Furthermore, the Rio Conference recommended the convening of some important international conferences, particularly a conference on sustainable development for small, island developing States, a conference on the integrated development of coastal regions and a conference on marine resources.

Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 calls for the setting up of a high-level commission for sustainable development, to be responsible for follow-up and coordination of the decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Moreover, the statement of non-legally-binding but authoritative principles for a world consensus on the management, conservation

(Mr. Brahimi,
Rapporteur-General, UNCED)

and environmentally sound development of all types of forest is the first global consensus achieved in this field.

The Rio Conference represented, for humankind, an important step forward on the path towards sustainable development. However, history will remember not so much what happened at Rio as how much was or was not achieved in implementing the decisions taken there; in effect, future generations will be entitled to judge us not on the quality of the texts adopted at Rio de Janeiro, but rather on whatever we do or fail to do to flesh out the commitments that were undertaken there.

This means that we have yet to face up to the responsibilities that constitute the real challenge of Rio. It certainly has put major and very special responsibilities on this session of the General Assembly. The General Assembly, having made its contribution to the Rio process, is now called upon to finish the job the Rio Conference began. Accordingly, the Assembly is called upon to follow up the many recommendations referred to it by the Conference and to set up the institutional follow-up machinery envisaged therein. Given this background, priority will have to be given to mobilizing the new and additional financial resources needed to implement the undertakings made in the interest of the developing countries. In this respect, the proposal that a pledging conference - to ensure that the activities planned under Agenda 21 can be carried out - should be called before the end of this year, is one that should be taken up.

The same is true for the proposal put forward by the tenth summit meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-aligned Countries, which took place in Jakarta in September, to convene, at a time to be agreed, a summit

(Mr. Brahimi,
Rapporteur-General, UNCED)

meeting to review and follow up the implementation of the decisions of the Rio Conference.

The road to Rio was particularly complex and arduous, but the road that we still must travel before we can rise to the level of the ideals proclaimed there will be at least as rugged or perhaps even more so, since the road onwards from Rio will be more important that the road that led us there. Therefore, as I offer for your consideration the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which appears as document A/CONF.151/26, Volumes 1 to 5, with a view to your taking the necessary decisions, I express the hope that your discussions here will make it possible to keep alive the flame of hope kindled at the Earth Summit so that the Rio spirit can continue to inspire our actions and guide our steps in our journey of solidarity towards our common future.

Mr. CARDOSO (Brazil): I have come to this session to signify the importance Brazil attaches to the implementation of the decisions taken last June at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The peoples of the world were genuinely and deeply interested in what was discussed in Rio de Janeiro. At stake was the future of our planet.

But the Rio Conference did not end in Rio. The spirit that marked its deliberations - which has been termed "the spirit of Rio" by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali - should project itself far beyond 1992.

As a Senator, I had the opportunity of drawing public attention to the Conference, and I took part in the creation of a Parliamentary Committee that followed and supported the preparatory work. Next month Brazil will host the environment and development Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Now,

(Mr. Cardoso, Brazil)

as Foreign Minister, I regard it as a great honour to ensure our participation in the common endeavour of implementing the results of the Rio Conference and of responding to the challenges we now have to face.

As the host country to UNCED, Brazil takes particular pride in an unprecedented United Nations event that can be identified as a major success. What emerged from Rio was a consensus on a broad array of subjects related to environment and development. The main virtue of this consensus lies in the vigorous contribution to the promotion of a major shift in international relations, particularly in the way in which the North and the South interrelate.

(Mr. Cardoso, Brazil)

All countries are now partners in a common enterprise. The simple categories of donor and recipient countries no longer apply. This new partnership expresses a logic of cooperation that rules out both confrontation and patronizing attitudes, a trend in which global negotiations are relegitimized as a process for the fostering of world-wide understanding. Multilateralism has been strengthened by the realization that solutions to universal problems require universal and equitable participation.

The current process of redefining the directions and working methods of the United Nations cannot but be enriched by that diplomatic turning-point, a milestone among the Rio achievements. International cooperation for development was rescued from the condition of stalemate and stagnation in which it had been languishing for so long. Lifestyles based on waste and squandering are now called into question, while the perpetuation of poverty has finally been recognized as unacceptable. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) has thus become a referent, a point of departure for the establishment of new patterns for international cooperation, guided by the imperative need to address, jointly, the issues of environment and development. The link now firmly established between overdevelopment and underdevelopment reinforces the certainty that environment and development cannot be dealt with separately, since the effective protection of the former depends on the advancement of the latter.

It must be highlighted that UNCED sought neither a partial reorientation of economic activity nor the adoption of palliative, transitory measures. Simply stated, its objective was to redefine development and to carry this concept to new levels of rationality and solidarity under the assumption,

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accepted by all, that this is the only way to guarantee sustainability and decent living conditions for mankind as a whole.

Rio provided fertile ground for deliberations on universal problems with the open and egalitarian participation of all States, big and small. This was a true lesson of democracy in international relations. Consequently, a new standard of interests and responsibilities emerged from these negotiations.

Rio also revealed a trend that has been created by the increasing participation of different sectors of society in discussions and activities related to environmental and developmental issues. In this connection the role to be played by non-governamental organizations, as well as by the scientific and business sectors, promises great prospects for international cooperation in this post-UNCED period.

At UNCED, a new paradigm emerged around the concept of sustainable development. It seeks to assure, for the benefit of present and future generations, a rational balance between the legitimate aspirations of well-being and development, on the one hand, and the maintenance of a healthy planet, on the other. Sustainable development is the contemporary expression of progress.

With Agenda 21 and the other instruments agreed upon at Rio, developed and developing countries have recognized that they must undertake commitments in a spirit of mutuality, based on the principle of equal but differentiated responsibilities.

In relation to the issue of forests, the international community was, for the first time, able to take a stand, by consensus, on the conservation, management and sustainable development of all types of forest through the

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adoption of a political declaration and an action plan. It is important that these arrangements be given sufficient time to work.

The two legal instruments opened for signature at the Rio Conference - the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity - signify the determination of the international community to take appropriate steps for the protection of particularly vulnerable areas of the environment. They represent a highly relevant contribution to the development of international law in the field of sustainable development.

Inspired by the Rio Declaration, we must proceed. The Declaration is a product of this historical moment, pointing to the future without underestimating or eluding contemporary problems, among which are those related to the disadvantageous positions of developing countries on the international scene. It is of special significance that a core element in the Rio Declaration is the recognition that the right to development must be fulfilled so as equitably to meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Bearing in mind the decisions and recommendations of the Conference, the Latin American and Caribbean countries set up a group that considered basic elements related to the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Its conclusions were presented as a contribution to the activities of the Group of 77. As a result, a position paper was agreed upon that we regard as a sound basis for the deliberations of the General Assembly on the matter.

Agenda 21, whose implementation is to be followed by the Commission, is a bold programme of work, the largest ever adopted by the international community. To meet the legitimate expectations it generated, it has to be put

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into effect in its entirety at the local, national, regional and universal levels. Partial or misguided appraisals are pitfalls which must be avoided.

To that end, and in order to achieve the goal of sustainable development as defined in Agenda 21, it is imperative that the specific commitments encompassed in chapter 33 of the Agenda relative to new and additional financial resources be met through a flexible, transparent, democratic and universal approach to the financial mechanisms.

By the same token, the provisions related to transfer of technology are crucial for the inception of the follow-up process and must be translated into tangible measures in the short term. Brazil hopes that at the forty-seventh of the General Assembly concrete pledges and commitments will be announced. It is disquieting to note that during the five months since the Rio Conference no significant movement in terms of financial resources has been perceived that could be identified with the commitments upon which the new world-wide partnership is to be constructed.

It is a matter of increasing concern that in the short but significant post-UNCED period the issue of the environment has become somewhat less evident in the agenda of meetings of developed countries. It now seems to receive less attention than it deserves at meetings of important pohcy-making bodies.

Brazil is determined to fulfil its responsibilities. President Itamar Franco has decided to create a Ministry of the Environment, demonstrating the priority he attaches to matters related to sustainable development.

The spirit of Rio must prevail. That is our business here during this session of the General Assembly. Brazil attaches special importance to the

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Commission on Sustainable Development. The effective implementation of the new framework for international cooperation will, to a large extent, depend on the work to be carried out by this new body.

It is essential that it be given the necessary support in effectively carrying out its functions, not the least among which is the unprecedented mandate to monitor matters related to chapter 33 on financial resources. Without the appropriate provision of such resources neither will implementation of Agenda 21 be possible nor the creation of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development itself be justified.

For the Commission to be effective an appropriate degree of proportionality must be maintained. The implementation of the programme of work calls not only for a high-level commission but also for a high-level secretariat with a substantive capability and with adequate resources for the implementation of Agenda 21.

(Mr. Cardoso, Brazil)

As we see it, upon its establishment the Commission should have as one of its main aims the early promotion, publicizing and fulfilment of the principles embodied in the Rio Declaration.

As for Agenda 21, we must keep in mind that this blueprint for action is the fruit of a negotiating process of a political and diplomatic nature. Its follow-up shall therefore be entrusted to an intergovernmental body whose composition is to be essentially political.

Attention must be paid to the need for precise specification of the role and competence of those sectors assigned to bring their relevant input to the deliberations of governmental representatives. Otherwise the effectiveness of the Commission could be put in jeopardy.

The establishment of the Commission should not, using the argument of avoiding duplication of work within the system, lead to the elimination of other bodies which have their own specific and often complementary mandates.

It would indeed be a contradiction to tear down some of the pillars of the system precisely at a time when so much effort is being directed to the strengthening of United Nations responsiveness and ability to cope with the ever growing multiplicity and complexity of economic, social and scientific and technological problems affecting the international community.

Brazil made the offer to host an international research centre on sustainable development. We hope that this initiative, which was welcomed positively in a resolution approved at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), will meet with the support of the international community.

The first measures for its implementation have already been taken. Its purpose will be to contribute to a better understanding of the concept of

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sustainable development both in theory and in practice, thus becoming an international forum for the exchange of information, public education and research as regards the implementation of decisions taken in Rio.

I have invited eminent personalities and experts to cooperate with this project. Among them, I would mention Professor Celso Lafer, who as my predecessor headed the Brazilian delegation to the Rio Conference and acted as one of its Vice-Presidents. I am grateful for what he has accomplished in preparing for the setting-up of the Centre.

We believe that solid ground has been carefully prepared for a new, fruitful era of international cooperation based on democratically negotiated commitments and on the principles of international law.

One of the great accomplishments of UNCED was that of giving concrete shape to the notion that democratic participation cannot be disregarded, either domestically or internationally, if common goals are to be pursued. That concept was brought forth at Rio in an exceedingly clear fashion, within the context of a solid linkage between specific interests and universal concerns.

That was a remarkable example of democracy at work. Let us carry on along the same path.

Mr. MACLEAN (United Kingdom): I have the honour of speaking today on behalf of the European Community and its member States.

The Earth Summit which took place in Rio de Janeiro in June has been rightly heralded as the most significant international meeting of its kind since the founding fathers of the United Nations met in San Francisco almost 50 years ago. We congratulate the Government and the generous people of Brazil for the hospitality and welcome they gave to us all at that momentous meeting.

(Mr. MacLean, United Kingdom)

As I think back to Rio and contemplate the work we have to do to fulfil the commitments we entered into there, I am reinforced in my view of how important an event it was. The present state of the world economy, and the difficulties facing many countries - rich as well as poor, in the North as well as in the South - brings home to all of us the importance of the development aspect of the work of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It is legitimately the first objective of any Government to maintain the quality of life of its citizens.

Today, even in the most developed of the world's economies, living standards are coming under heavy pressure. We all face the urgent need to quicken economic activity, to provide a framework for sustainable growth. We need such growth if we are to be able to address satisfactorily the other, environment, aspect of UNCED. And of course we are all now much more aware that we face disaster unless we take account of the impact of our lifestyles on the environment.

UNCED was right: we cannot separate environment from development. Nor can we separate North from South. There can be no question of one country or group of countries pushing their point of view upon others. More than a century ago the great English writer John Ruskin wrote, "When we build let us think that we build forever".

In Rio we laid the foundations for a new approach to the problems of environment and development, which I believe in years to come will be seen as the Summit's greatest achievement. UNCED was all about global cooperation, cooperation rooted in vision. There has never been a time in human history when foresight was more necessary to our future well being. We cannot of course foresee all or even most of what is to come. But some of what is to come in the next decade is already painfully visible.

(Mr. MacLean, United Kingdom)

We know, with some certainty, that there will be a billion more people on the planet. We know that the protective ozone layer in the stratosphere will be further depleted. We know that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere will have further increased. We cannot predict the speed and the extent of the global warming which will result. But we are told that a warming effect of even point three of one degree centigrade per decade would greatly exceed the capacity of our natural habitat to cope.

We know that every year an area of forest equal to the whole surface of England and Wales is destroyed - forest which performs the vital function of removing carbon dioxide from the air. We know too that if present trends continue some 240 billion tonnes more of top soil - nearly 40 tonnes per person - will have been washed away or scattered to the winds by the end of the decade, a loss which is already affecting harvests in some of the world's major food producing regions.

But we bring to these problems new knowledge and new capabilities, the product of the extraordinary technological and other progress that has taken place since the end of the Second World War. No generation in history has had so many opportunities to improve the conditions of life. In today's world more people are healthier and live longer than ever before. And yet more people than ever before - one billion of them - live in abject poverty. As we look into the future it is clear that the gains that some of us have made and our prospects for helping those less fortunate will be jeopardized unless we are able to first halt, and then reverse, the depletion of the earth's natural capital and the degradation of our environment.

The profound achievement of UNCED was to map out a strategy for dealing with these vast and daunting problems. Its success was to turn the world's attention to solutions as well as problems.

(Mr. MacLean, United Kingdom)

We are all familiar with the highlights of what was achieved in Rio: the two conventions - on climate change and biodiversity - the Rio Declaration, the first global consensus on forests and the adoption of Agenda 21. These were historic agreements. But unless we proceed rapidly to the implementation of the measures we agreed to in Rio, the political commitments of so many national leaders and the tens of thousands of hours of analysis, discussion and negotiation will all have been for nought.

The European Community and its member States take the implementation of our Rio commitments very seriously. That is why, within days of the Rio Summit, we committed ourselves at the European Council in Lisbon to an eight-point plan which envisages a vigorous programme of work to maintain momentum on the road from Rio. The European Community as a whole has already undertaken to stabilize its carbon-dioxide emissions at the 1990 level by the year 2000. We have begun work nationally and as a Community on developing strategies showing how we intend to meet our commitments under the Framework Convention on Climate Change, which we signed in Rio. These strategies are a precursor to fulfilling our pledge to ratify the Convention, if possible, before the end of 1993. Ratification will only be a beginning; in time we will need to consider what other undertakings will be required to fill out the framework.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate those countries that have already completed their ratification processes and to urge all other countries to ratify the Convention as soon as possible. There is considerable work to be done before the Convention enters into force and the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties takes place. We therefore hope that this Assembly

(Mr. MacLean, United Kingdom)

will give the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee an appropriate mandate and support to continue its activities until then.

We are also working within the Community to establish a basis for the early ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which the Community and its member States signed in Rio. We look forward to a resumption of the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee as soon as possible next year. In the meantime work on the preparation of national biodiversity strategies has begun. This work will be much assisted by the requirements of the Community's Habitats Directive, which offers protection to large numbers of scarce plants and animals in Europe. The Directive was adopted in May of this year and will come into force in 1995.

The European Community and its member States attach high importance to the declaration on forest principles. It is a useful benchmark for future national and international measures and instruments, including a possible forestry convention, and we have undertaken to publish national plans for implementing these principles as well as a Community strategy. We are also committed to the establishment of an international review process for the principles. We propose that this task be undertaken by the high level Commission on Sustainable Development and believe this could lead to strengthening international cooperation in this important area.

The need to address the issue of desertification was clearly recognised in Rio. The Lisbon Council endorsed our commitment to establishing an international process to begin preparing a convention on combating desertification in those countries, particularly in Africa, experiencing drought or desertification. The Community and its member States believe that this session of the General Assembly should agree on the framework for such

(Mr. MacLean, United Kingdom)

negotiations, including the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee along similar lines to that which successfully prepared the climate Convention.

Agenda 21 is a far-reaching process. It is a framework for action on sustainable development; but it is a framework whose credibility depends on the willingness of all of us to put our own houses in order. That is why the European Community and its member States set such store by the preparation of national and Community strategies for sustainable development which will entail integrating environmental policy with policy in other areas. This work is already well advanced. The Fifth Action Programme on the Environment, which I hope to see adopted before the end of this year, is the point of departure within the Community for the implementation of Agenda 21. It provides a comprehensive framework for integrating all kinds of human activities that affect the environment in order to move towards sustainability.

The Rio Summit has generated many national initiatives. My own Government will convene next year a global forum of non-governmental organizations to examine and clarify their roles in the practical implementation of Agenda 21. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) stressed the importance of access to environmentally sound technology, and I should like to welcome here the initiative of the Government of Greece to organize the first international exhibition and conference on environmental technology for the Mediterranean region (HELECO), which will be held in Athens next April. We also look forward to the meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Montreal Protocol in Copenhagen later this month.

At the heart of the UNCED follow-up will be the high level Commission on Sustainable Development, which we propose should meet in Geneva. The

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Secretary-General's helpful report on institutional arrangements to follow up UNCED makes clear that the creation of such a Commission involves many issues, of which I would like to highlight three.

First, to be effective the Commission must have a highly qualified and competent secretariat, led by a high-ranking official, both to service the Commission and to act as an inter-agency focal point for coordination in the field of sustainable development.

Second, we need a Commission that is open to new ideas and which provides for the effective and enhanced participation of non-governmental and other relevant organizations, including international financial institutions and regional development banks. This Commission should focus on urgent policy issues which could be reviewed each year at a one- or two-day meeting of Ministers. It should provide, as UNCED did, for the European Community to participate fully.

Third, the Commission's work must be organized so as to avoid the sterile and repetitive debates that have too frequently characterized the work of subsidiary bodies established under the Economic and Social Council. We are struck by the advantages of the segment-based approach of the Economic and Social Council, which seems to me to provide a more attractive model on which to base the new Commission. We also recommend that the High-level Advisory Board proposed at Rio, which will provide intellectual underpinning for the work of the Commission, be merged with the Committee for Development Planning, a body that has already acquired an enviable reputation in the United Nations system.

Of course, putting our own house in order and establishing the Commission on Sustainable Development are only part of what needs to be done to implement Agenda 21. We must also help others to play their part in our common cause.

(Mr. MacLean, United Kingdom)

It was agreed in Rio that, in general, the financing for the implementation of Agenda 21 would come from a country's own public and private sectors. For developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, official development assistance is a main source of external funding, and substantial new and additional funding for sustainable development and implementation of Agenda 21 will be required. In Rio we reaffirmed our commitments to reach the accepted United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance as soon as possible and to ensure prompt and effective implementation of Agenda 21.

The European Community and its member States are determined, in fulfilment of these commitments, to strengthen our assistance to developing countries in the field of sustainable development and to increase our funding for Agenda 21. Our commitment amounts to 3 billion European currency units, including significant new and additional resources for specific projects and programmes in key Agenda 21 sectors as an initial contribution to its early implementation. Within each of those sectors, poverty reduction, technology transfer and institutional capacity-building will be given very high priority. We are coordinating actively and urgently the development of this initiative. We will continue to report on its implementation in the institutional follow-up to the Conference.

We are also committed to the Global Environment Facility, which exists to provide additional grant and concessional funding to finance the agreed incremental costs of achieving agreed global environmental benefits. We envisage that the Facility will become the permanent financial mechanism for the Framework Conventions on the Conservation of Climate and of Biological

(Mr. MacLean, United Kingdom)

Diversity and other relevant global environmental conventions. For this purpose the Global Environment Facility should be appropriately restructured in accordance with chapter 33 of Agenda 21. We are committed to its replenishment and to the provision of new and additional resources for this purpose. We also recognize the need to provide substantial financial resources to the International Development Association in order to promote sustainable development, and we will continue to give consideration to an Earth increment for environmental purposes.

There are many other important issues with which we will need to deal. I am conscious that the road from Rio will be more crowded than the road to Rio and that we will not succeed in making the life chances we have enjoyed available to future generations unless we resolve the problems posed by the expected doubling of the planet's population by the year 2050. We must make every effort to ensure that the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development strengthens global cooperation on these interrelated issues.

I am conscious that all the plans and strategies in the world will make little difference to the well-being of those without guaranteed access to human rights and democratic freedoms. Achieving sustainable development is above all a participative endeavour. It is difficult for those without freedom to participate.

The road from Rio will be long and arduous, but the unprecedented gathering in Rio has set us off to a good start on this long march. It is our duty now not to falter at the first milestone.

Mr. ZAKI (Pakistan): It is a great honour for me to participate, on behalf of Pakistan and the Group of 77, in the General Assembly's consideration of the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (A/CONF.151/26, vols. I-IV).

(Mr. Zaki, Pakistan)

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and the Rapporteur-General, the distinguished Foreign Minister of Algeria, for their reports on the Rio Conference. I should also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Maurice Strong, and to the staff of its secretariat, who worked hard to produce the final documents now before us. Our special thanks are also due to Brazil for making excellent arrangements in hosting the Earth Summit.

We have listened with great interest to the statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations regarding his plans for the restructuring of the United Nations and its Secretariat. These original and far-reaching proposals will be studied with the greatest interest by the member States of the Group of 77, who are at present engaged in considering the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations under item 47 of our agenda.

Through the golden ages of past civilizations, the harmony between nature and man remained basically undisturbed. The industrial revolution produced the first signs of man's capacity to harness the forces of nature and to change the balance between himself and his environment. This capacity has led to phenomenal growth in economic prosperity and technological advancement, telescoping the pace of centuries into decades, years, months and days.

We, the men and women of this century, cannot but wonder at the achievements of our ingenuity and endeavour. Yet we must also frankly admit that we have failed in at least two important respects.

First, we have allowed economic and technological progress to be uneven, unequal and even exploitative. There is now greater disparity between the rich and the poor and between the advanced and the oppressed peoples of the

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world. The challenge of development today is not only to achieve growth, but to realize growth with equity and justice. This is a challenge among nations as well as within nations. Without introducing greater equity, the world will not be able to sustain the political, social and technological structures which have provided the foundation for the dynamic acceleration of growth, innovation and investment in the developed and many developing countries.

(Mr. Zaki, Pakistan)

Our second failure is that our strategies and patterns of growth have virtually disregarded the impact of progress on our planet and on the delicate balance between man and nature. Growth has been based largely on the consumption of fossil fuels. Industrial processes have ignored the grave impact on our rivers, lakes and ecological systems. Some schemes for rapid development have brutally devastated vast regions of the world. And poverty, made worse by inequality and inequity, has obliged destitute peoples to degrade their forests and lands in the race to keep up with the growing price of subsistence. Meanwhile, the inexorable growth in population is eating away their economic growth and threatens their environment and their social and political systems.

The Rio Conference was unique in the breadth of its concerns: the future well-being of the human race and of our planet. With 120 Heads of State or Government in Rio, the high level of its participants was historic. Its decisions - the Rio Declaration, the programme of action called Agenda 21, and the launching of the Conventions on biodiversity and climate change - will continue to have vital importance for all our nations in the coming century.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, participated in the Conference to underline his firm commitment to the promotion of environmentally sound development. A national conservation strategy has been elaborated and adopted in Pakistan. This will be used by the Government of Pakistan as a guide to ensure that all its future development plans are in consonance with the objective of arresting environmental deterioration.

This General Assembly is called upon to adopt the results of the Rio Conference and to initiate the process of follow-up action, in particular the

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implementation of Agenda 21. The documents approved at Rio constitute an important advance towards global recognition of the twin imperatives of development with equity and development without damage to the environment. Both these goals are not only essential but also mutually compatible and mutually reinforcing.

The intellectual and scientific debates relating to the Rio Conference have led to a sharper political awareness in the industrial countries of the intimate relationship between the environment and development and the interdependent nature of the world economy. They have also promoted a greater consciousness in the developing countries that environmentally sound growth is the most sustainable and desirable form of development.

The Rio Summit represents a new approach to development, a new concept of a mutually dependent partnership for growth and survival, thus integrating the aspirations of the developing countries and the concerns of the developed. This new political compact provides the paradigm for action towards genuine progress and global prosperity in the twenty-first century.

Allow me to state, on behalf of the developing countries, and particularly the members of the Group of 77, that we have accepted the commitments flowing from the Rio Summit out of a sense of responsibility to our own peoples and to the future well-being of our planet. The commitments undertaken by the developing countries at the Rio Summit represent a historic leap in their political readiness to respond to the challenging requirements of environmentally sound development.

We must frankly express our sense of regret that the commitment to these global goals of the developed countries has not been at a similar level. They

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remain preoccupied with their immediate economic, political and social problems. The solidarity demanded by the new paradigm of environmentally sound development is limited if not absent in their policies relating to development assistance, trade liberalization and technological cooperation.

The Group of 77 is firmly of the view that the provision of adequate new and additional financing is an essential condition, a sine qua non, for the effective implementation of Agenda 21. It is obvious that the financing requirements for Agenda 21 far exceed the resources which can be mobilized by the developing countries. Additional external financing is required at the bilateral level and through multilateral channels to implement the projects and programmes for sustainable development in developing countries. The Group of 77 therefore calls for the full implementation of the commitments made in chapter 33 of Agenda 21 on financial resources and mechanisms.

Sustainable development should be promoted through the establishment of a Commission, as envisaged in Agenda 21. The Group of 77 has circulated a document setting out its views on the functions and structure of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The tasks of this Commission will be both conceptual and practical. It must enhance the international cooperation required to integrate development and environmental issues.

The Commission on Sustainable Development should regularly review and monitor the activities of various financing sources and mechanisms related to Agenda 21 in order to fulfil the objectives of chapter 33. It should also ensure an effective link between the availability and maximization of new and additional financial resources.

We believe that all sources and mechanisms, including the global environment facility, must regularly report to the Commission on Sustainable

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Development on the level of financing so that the Commission is able to monitor effectively the availability of funds. The Global Environment Facility is only one of the mechanisms for the financing of Agenda 21, and the Group of 77 attaches great importance to its restructuring in accordance with Agenda 21, especially to the principles of democratic governance and transparency in decision-making and operations. This restructuring must be undertaken as soon as possible and should be reported and reviewed by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its first meeting early next year.

(Mr. Zaki, Pakistan)

Access to technology too is a vital prerequisite for the success of the goals of the Rio summit. We attach fundamental importance to the transfer of technology to the developing countries on preferential and concessionary terms. A conscious endeavour is required to promote the knowledge and expertise required to implement environmentally sound development policies in the developing counties. Without such capabilities the achievement of sustainable development in those countries will remain a mirage.

Two other issues require special action: desertification and the problems of small island developing countries. We look forward to the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee to formulate a convention to combat desertification. The Group of 77 further proposes that a global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States should be held in June 1993 to consider means to overcome the disadvantages of those States.

Further action is also required to build on the two Conventions - on biological diversity and on climate change, respectively - which were opened for signature at Rio. The financing mechanisms and sources, of which the Global Environment Facility is one, should report to the conferences of the parties to those Conventions.

Much of the world's finite resources is being depleted or degraded owing to unsustainable patterns of consumption and production in the developed countries. It is well recognized that the present environmental crisis is due mainly to unrestrained and unsustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles in the developed countries. Unfortunately, Agenda 21 does not contain specific commitments by the developed countries to address these issues.

(Mr. Zaki, Pakistan)

The experience of inequality in the evolution of international economic relations must not be repeated in the promotion of the new partnership which was forged at the Rio summit to promote sustainable development. The developing countries should not be asked to bear the brunt of sacrifices to preserve the world's environment and ecological system. They must not be asked to forgo development while the industrialized countries persist in their present pattern of unrestrained consumption.

An important step that must now be taken is to determine specific policies to create the external economic conditions that will enable the developing countries to reach the goals of sustainable development. The most important of these conditions is access for the exports of developing countries to the markets of the advanced nations, which continue to shutter their economies behind tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

The World Bank estimates that trade barriers cost the developing countries about $100 billion in lost annual income in 1990 alone, an amount that is twice the annual development assistance from the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and, even more significant, is twice the annual interest paid by the developing countries on their public external debt.

The developed countries must overcome their squabbles over agriculture and speedily conclude the Uruguay Round. They must respond with courage and conviction to resist and reverse the forces of protectionism. They must resolve their differences on the fiscal and monetary policies which, together with their protectionist tendencies, are worsening the impact of the current global recession.

(Mr. Zaki, Pakistan)

The momentum generated by the Rio Conference must not be allowed to dissipate. The spirit of cooperation displayed at Rio must guide us in the implementation of Agenda 21. The post-Rio process must consolidate the gains and build on the agreements of Rio. There is an inescapable necessity for the international community to act in concert, to ensure for succeeding generations a pattern of sustainable growth.

We inherited this beautiful planet from our ancestors. It was full of the bounties of nature, including fresh air and clean water. We have an obligation to pass this legacy to our children and grandchildren, free of pollution and able to sustain and nurture life. We must therefore make sincere endeavours to realize the historic consensus that was forged at the Rio Conference.

Mr. REILLY (United States of America): This week, as those who were in New York yesterday no doubt discovered, is Marathon Week in New York City. As members may know, the object of some runners in a marathon is to win. But for most participants it is simply to finish, ideally in a good time. For most participants the race, then, is against the clock, that is against oneself. That, it seems to me, is not a bad metaphor for our own work at Rio and now here this week. We are engaged in a kind of marathon: a race against the clock; a race against ourselves; a race for the planet; a race against the exhaustion of its natural systems and the destruction of its stability.

For almost half a century this body has been the repository of many of the world's hopes for the future. The United Nations has fed the world's hungry, healed the sick and protected the oppressed. Through nearly 50 years

(Mr. Reilly, United States)

of political change, war and peace, economic growth and recession, this institution has helped bind the nations of the world together in a common humanitarian cause.

Today we live in a world where change is more dramatic, more accelerated, more far-reaching than ever. As political alliances shift, as fledgling democracies emerge from collapsed dictatorships, as national economies adjust to a growing interdependence in the global marketplace, we face staggering challenges.

Nowhere is this change more evident, nowhere are the challenges more compelling than in the global need for economic development that does not make you sick, shorten your life or diminish your dignity: development, in sum, that is environmentally sustainable. Nowhere do we see more clearly the importance, the value of the United Nations. The people of the world must work together to protect the global environment, and coordinated, cooperative action is the hallmark of the United Nations.

(Mr. Reilly, United States)

Last June, in Rio, over 170 countries met at one of the most important multinational conferences in history. At Rio we recognized the danger to human survival and the impediment to economic development from the poisoning of our Earth, from the disruption of the planet's atmospheric equilibrium, from the degradation of human and ecological health, and from the depletion of our natural resources. After two years of preparatory negotiations, the Earth Summit had before it a number of significant, new international agreements and statements: the Rio Declaration; the climate change Convention, which the United States has ratified; the Declaration of Forest Principles; Agenda 21; and the Convention on biodiversity. At Rio we also agreed to create a new body within the United Nations, a Commission on Sustainable Development, to help implement Agenda 21 and help national economies grow in ways that protect their environmental support systems.

The forty-seventh session of the General Assembly of the United Nations is the first major test of the obligations we agreed in Rio. Here we must move beyond the rhetoric of Rio. Here we must translate our Rio pledges into strong, cooperative action.

During this session, the United States looks forward to substantial progress in several areas. We want to establish a strong basis for negotiation of an international convention to combat desertification. We want to initiate serious discussions related to high seas fisheries, especially highly migratory species and straddling stocks. We anticipate discussing ways to foster sustainable development in small island States.

But no issue in Agenda 21 is more important to us today than the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development. My delegation believes that we can and must put that machinery in place as soon as possible, so we can begin

(Mr. Reilly, United States)

our substantive work as early as possible in the new year. While pressing forward on the goals of Agenda 21, this new Commission must be part of the ongoing revitalization of the United Nations economic and social functions: efficient, innovative and built upon the resources available within the United Nations.

This Commission must be a focus of international support for sustainable, environmentally sound development for generations to come. It must be carefully, thoughtfully structured to help the emerging global market-place remain vigorous, while the natural systems and resources on which all human activity depends remain healthy and productive.

There are several competing visions for this Commission. We believe that the disparate and far-reaching commitments made in Rio need to be monitored, measured and publicized. The most comprehensive and ambitious of the Rio documents is Agenda 21. As a voluntary, non-binding statement of intentions it has no home or parent, no protector or patron. The Commission on Sustainable Development should undertake this role.

I foresee a Commission charged with the responsibility to chart the progress and chronicle the digressions along the road from Rio. I envisage a Commission which, while not exercising coercive power, uses the moral authority of this body to remind the world - and specific countries as appropriate - of practical opportunities to further sustainable development, and of shortcomings and failures, the strengths and also the weaknesses of policies, priorities and projects.

There is no other appropriate institution to perform this essential function. To do so effectively the Commission will need a strong and respected voice, leadership of stature, and international support. It will

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need professional staff and the capacity to draw on the technical resources of other United Nations institutions.

To ensure that the Commission fulfils the vision proposed for it at Rio it should review and report on the progress of nations in implementing Agenda 21; it should draw on the work of United Nations agencies to follow the critical issues raised in Agenda 21 - deforestation, the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation, the human misery caused by polluted drinking water and lack of sanitation, desertification, and others; it should encourage review of subsidies for unsustainable development and promote consideration of measures aimed at ending them; and it should promote review of the environmental effects and sustainability of major development projects, especially those of the World Bank and of regional development banks. Its rules of procedure must be flexible so that those with genuine expertise in sustainable development can contribute to its work, and it must ensure that non-governmental organizations are significantly involved in its work in an appropriate way as valued partners.

The Commission on Sustainable Development will address a key question facing nations today: how do we expand our economies to meet the aspirations of our people, while still protecting human health and the natural resources on which lasting economic growth depends? How we answer this question will define our quality of life in the twenty-first century. Thus the United States supports the idea of the Commission and the goals of the Commission, and we shall support the Commission in its operations as well.

In 1993, United States total overseas development assistance will grow to more than $11 billion, a nearly 4 per cent increase over 1992. Some of the increase will come from additional contributions to multilateral programmes

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and funds. Our contribution to the United Nations Development Programme will grow by 9 per cent, to $125 million; United States funding for the United Nations Environment Programme will rise by 21 per cent, to $22 million. For the Montreal Protocol, we intend to provide $28 million in 1993, compared to just over $18 million in 1992.

Next month the parties to the Montreal Protocol will meet in Copenhagen to consider bringing forward the date at which nations phase out manufacture of ozone-depleting substances. The United States Government will phase out chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) by the end of 1995. We strongly believe that all developed countries should agree to do the same. We also strongly believe that developing countries should consider following the example of Mexico and Thailand and agree to cease production of CFCs by the year 2000. But we recognize that they will need financial help to make the transition to less harmful substitutes. Therefore we are committed to continuing the Montreal Protocol Fund and replenishing it at an appropriate level to meet identified needs. This, it seems clear to me, is the bargain reached with the developing nations when the London Agreements were consummated in the summer of 1990, and we strongly encourage other developed nations to join us in making this new financial commitment to maintaining a healthy, independent Montreal Protocol Fund.

Total United States contributions to multilateral development banks in 1993 will be nearly $1.6 billion, including a new contribution of $90 million for the Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank. Now, as these figures show, the United States commitment to the United Nations and to the international community is stronger than ever.

(Mr. Reilly, United States)

At the same time, it is important to remember that there is more the United States can and will do, there is more all nations can - and must - do, to support sustainable development world-wide. Economic and environmental history suggests that poverty and environmental degradation go hand in hand. The poorest people suffer from the most polluted drinking water, lack of sewage treatment and improper disposal of wastes. Only economic growth can bring the financial and technical resources necessary to protect human health and natural systems. In fact, economic growth itself is one of our most powerful tools for protecting the environment.

(Mr. Reilly, United States)

To stimulate economic growth and support sustainable development, we must ensure that the fundamental pillars of a strong market economy are built in every nation. This requires debt reform, open investment policies and trade liberalization. The United States has advanced these principles with our "Enterprise for the Americas" initiative. We will continue to push for growth-stimulating reform through the North American Free Trade Agreement, debt-for-nature swaps, expanded environmental efforts in the multilateral development banks, and expanded technical cooperation with nations around the world. All this, I am convinced, will lead to increased global investments in environmental protection.

I can think of no better example of the environmental opportunities offered by economic reform than that of our good neighbour Mexico. Over the past several years, Mexico's economy has grown at a record-setting pace. Because of Mexico's move toward open investment, debt reform, free trade and privatization, more than $25 billion in foreign investment has flowed into that country. During the same period, Mexico's investment in environmental protection has grown to the point where it is now 1 per cent of gross national product.

The lesson here is clear: even as we build new international institutions, even as we broaden intergovernmental cooperation, we must strengthen our national economies by tearing down the barriers to free trade. The economic benefits of free trade will do more to protect the global environment than we could ever expect from foreign aid alone.

We in the United States cherish our political and economic freedom. We believe it is no coincidence that the American Declaration of Independence and Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations were both written in the same year. In our

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country, free markets and individual liberty are mutually supporting and bound together.

Environmental policy may well be the single most successful of all United States domestic policies of the past 20 years. The United States was the first country to enact comprehensive national environmental laws, and environmental conditions today are far better than they were 20 years ago, in urban air and water quality, in nature protection, in park and wilderness protection and in the revival of endangered wildlife. Most important, we made this environmental progress while our economy continued to grow. Economic growth financed our environmental investments. Economic growth and environmental protection can go hand-in-hand.

The American people support the goals of Agenda 21. We support a Commission on Sustainable Development with a strong voice and a significant role. We believe in sustainable development because it is increasingly a valued and successful part of our own national experience. Let us then create the Commission on Sustainable Development now, so that we can get on with the race on the road from Rio in the spirit of long-distance runners, with our eye on the clock.

Mr. TÖPFER (Germany): At the start of today's debate, the representative of the United Kingdom, my colleague David MacLean, outlined the position of the European Community and its member States on the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Federal Republic of Germany supports this view. In the light of the special political significance my Government attaches to the follow-up of the Earth Summit in Rio, I should like to add the following.

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

We have concluded a final act of Rio. Each of its elements - the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the statement on forest principles - is important in itself, as are the Conventions signed in Rio on climate change and biodiversity. All the results are geared towards an honest, committed follow-up process in a global partnership of environment and development. The global Rio process for economic, social and environmental development and cooperation must become as successful as the Helsinki process is for security and cooperation in Europe.

The crucial challenge facing us as industrialized countries is laid down in the Rio Declaration, namely the special responsibility we bear in view of the pressures we have placed on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources we command.

The "spirit of Rio", which we were happily able to help engender, must now prove its worth in practice, in particular in an era where the global economic framework is making this more rather than less difficult.

The United Nations has contributed substantially to the end of the East-West conflict and has emerged from it in a strengthened position. It has a central role to play in securing and maintaining peace. This is to a large extent thanks to the resolve and vigour demonstrated by the Secretary-General. We must use the capacities thus released to avoid a new conflict between rich and poor, between north, east and south.

The United Nations is also essential to solving global environment and development problems. The preservation of creation, the overcoming of underdevelopment and the halting of the destruction of the environment are

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

integral elements of a sustainable new world order geared towards securing peace. We need a foreign policy on economic development and cooperation and on the environment, both by States and by the United Nations.

We need a strengthened, internationally coordinated environmental and development competence: we must gear the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to the new challenges we face. They must be put in a position where they are able to fulfil the tasks set down in Agenda 21, the manual of environment and development cooperation.

The innovative approach taken in Rio, however, lies in integrating environment and development - two sides of the same coin. This is the major task of the new high-level United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. It must act as a coordinating link not only between UNEP and UNDP, but also among all the Members of the United Nations family, national Governments and representatives of the non-governmental sector. A comprehensive catalogue of measures will make it a significant force in the follow-up to Rio.

Given the significance of the questions at hand, in particular the need to keep the public at large focused on them, we, together with our partners in the European Community, are striving to ensure that this Commission also comes together at the ministerial level during its yearly meetings. Negotiations that took place during the concluding days of the Earth Summit in Rio also showed that important, controversial problems can often be solved only at this level.

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

We must use this unique and historic chance for an integrative interlocking of all institutions of the United Nations system. We must concentrate all energies on perceiving early and meeting constructively the huge challenges facing us in the economic, social and environmental fields.

We welcome the proposals of the Secretary-General to link closely the institutional follow-up to Rio with the restructuring measures he so vigorously initiated in the economic and social sector.

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

We encourage the Secretary-General to proceed purposefully with this reform task. The United Nations must become an institution that pursues its goals in the economic, social and environmental field as responsibly and as urgently as it fulfils its obligations in the area of peace and security. At the same time, we underline the necessity of regionalization or, as we call it in the European Communities, of subsidiarity.

We need to translate the Rio results promptly into practical action. Our priorities are the following.

Our first priority is immediate ratification and prompt implementation of the Conventions. They must prove to be dynamic instruments to further world-wide cooperation in combating the serious global problems.

This week, my Government will pass the Act ratifying the Climate Convention and forward it to parliament immediately. By the end of the year, we will submit to the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in Geneva our first national report on the steps we have taken to implement the Convention. It is our national target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 25 per cent to 30 per cent by the year 2005 on the basis of 1987 levels. A whole range of measures to achieve this target have already been introduced; more are being prepared.

In Rio, the European Communities and their member States once again affirmed their target of stabilizing carbon dioxide emissions throughout the Communities by the year 2000. Germany is pressing for the introduction of a carbon dioxide energy tax as an important instrument in the Communities' strategy.

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

In Rio de Janeiro the Federal Chancellor of Germany, Mr. Helmut Kohl, offered to host the first Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Climate Convention in Germany. We would be very happy if the General Assembly would support our invitation. The Conference is designed to bring about progress in implementing the Convention, developing it further and making its provisions more stringent.

Prompt implementation should also be a priority for the Convention on Biological Diversity at the next meeting of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). We welcome and support the steps that have been taken in this regard by the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Tolba, and the support by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

We shall strengthen our cooperation with developing countries, as well as with the countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to help them also to promptly implement these Conventions. To this end, we will allocate a total of DM 10 million in additional funds in 1993 for short-term programmes for the rapid implementation of both Conventions, in cooperation with developing countries.

In order to achieve the global convention on desertification by 1994, we shall support the establishment by the General Assembly of an intergovernmental negotiating committee. The same priority must be attached to the protection of water, especially of drinking water.

Our second priority is implementation and further development of the forest principles. The forest principles agreed on in Rio form a good basis for effective measures to manage, conserve and sustainably develop forests throughout the world. We must now implement these at the national level and gear our international cooperation towards them. I am convinced that on this

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

basis it will be possible for us to have a constructive dialogue on the implementation, review and further development of these principles in the Commission for Sustainable Development with a view to drafting further international agreements.

Our third priority is new forms of international economic relations. In order to improve living conditions for their people, developing countries need to strengthen and make full use of their own capacities rather than to be the recipient of external support. Therefore, we must break down trade barriers and open up our markets to give weaker economies better opportunities to proceed with sustainable development under their own steam. We all agree on the tremendous importance of a successful conclusion to the Uruguay Round.

With regard to the question of trade and the environment, we believe that particular priority must be given in future to international cooperation, especially in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). This means not only avoiding the creation by environmental regulations of unjustified trade barriers. If we are serious about the principle enshrined in the Rio Declaration on internalizing external costs and about the provisions of Agenda 21, we must also commit trade policy to sound environmental practice and the preservation of resources - in other words, to sustainable development.

Our fourth priority is new economic behaviour and new living patterns. An essential element of sustainable economic behaviour and sustainable living patterns lies primarily in changes to our own behaviour as producers and consumers. We in the industrialized countries have a particular responsibility in this regard, given the major part we play in global

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environmental damage. Only by gearing in particular economic, energy, transport and agricultural policy towards the principles of sound environmental practice will it be possible to achieve sustainable development.

It will not be possible to achieve sustainable development without consistently implementing a life cycle concept that evaluates the environmental soundness of a product from manufacture to disposal, from cradle to grave. In Germany we are paying particular attention to waste policy in order to move away from the "throw away" society towards environmentally sound products and production techniques.

The prices of our products and services must also reflect the costs they entail for the environment. We must continue to promote the use of economic instruments and market incentives. This is the best way to engender environmentally sound technological progress, which should also be transferred within the framework of technological cooperation. Instruments such as these can, moreover, be innovative sources of finance for measures to promote sustainable development.

An important prerequisite for a change in the behaviour of all our citizens towards more environmental compatibility is education and training, instruction and information. These elements must promote and strengthen awareness of the fact that each individual has to play his or her part in ensuring sustainable development in order to guarantee our joint survival on this planet. Given the limited resources at our disposal and the poverty gulf between North and South, East and West, the thinking in terms of entitlement and possession is also coming under scrutiny.

Our fifth priority is combating poverty. In order to remove the causes of poverty, structural reforms are essential. This means the creation of an

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economic, political and social framework at the national and international level to reduce poverty. Participation by the people, as well as close integration with environmental protection and sustainable management of resources are new elements of our joint strategy to combat poverty, as developed in Agenda 21.

German development cooperation views efforts to combat poverty as a priority task, and is involved in a great many projects in all areas receiving assistance.

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

Our sixth priority is population policy. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without a responsible population policy. We all know that measures for the advancement of women and for family planning are particularly effective - or even effective only - if they are combined into integrated programmes alongside measures to combat the underlying causes of rapid population growth, poverty and underdevelopment. That is the only way to escape from this vicious circle. An improvement in the social and economic position of women in developing countries is essential. People must be given the right to determine the size of their families as their own responsibility.

Our seventh priority is technological cooperation, the spreading of knowledge and capacity building. Modern, environmentally sound technologies must increasingly be used throughout the world, in particular in the fields of energy and transport and industrial and agricultural production. Enlarging institutional and technical capacities - in particular in developing countries - for choosing and applying suitable and adapted technologies is already a major element in German bilateral cooperation in the field of environment and development. We give our wholehearted support to the Capacity 21 programme of the United Nations Development Programme and have already made budgetary provisions to support it.

We support the setting up of technology consultation centres, in particular in cooperation with industry. We have therefore set up such a centre in South-East Asia, in cooperation with Singapore, and are seeking similar cooperation in Eastern Europe and in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Within the European Community, we are currently working on the establishment of such a centre in Africa.

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

Our eighth priority is financial questions. In Rio the Federal Chancellor, Mr. Kohl, made clear our determination to live up to our responsibility vis-à-vis the developing countries. In spite of the exceptional situation in the wake of German unification and our tremendous contribution to the process of reconstruction in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and of the Commonwealth of Independent States, we shall make every effort to do justice to the financial commitment made in Rio.

We continue to support the tripling of the size of the Global Environment Facility combined with a fair burden-sharing. The ongoing restructuring of the Global Environment Facility should be concluded promptly, including, in particular, adequate participation by developing countries in decision-making, in accordance with Agenda 21.

We consider it vital that the tenth replenishment of the International Development Association should maintain its value in real terms and that an Earth increment should be decided on. We are also prepared for the provision of further relief within the framework of the debt-servicing agreements of the Paris Club if the resources thus released are made available for measures to protect and maintain the environment.

Our ninth priority is that the aid we give can only help towards self-help. The developing countries and the countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States must use their own resources for sustainable development by taking action under their own steam, by creating suitable economic conditions and by ensuring democratic development and effective government. There are many hopeful beginnings. The decisions taken by the Conference of non-aligned States in Jakarta show encouraging progress, too.

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

Our tenth priority is that environmental destruction is a threat to peace and a threat to mankind. The large-scale, serious destruction of the environment is a topic that is of basic concern to us with a view to possible future conflicts, both in times of war and in times of peace. We welcome the work being done by the International Law Commission on environmental crime. It must be possible to bring before an international criminal court crimes such as genocide, the gravest violations of human rights, and far-reaching, serious damage to the environment. The international community must be enabled to punish such massive violations of international law. Rio has not helped us make much progress in this regard. I therefore consider that relevant, more-far-reaching decisions by the General Assembly are necessary.

It seems to me to be equally urgent that the international community be better equipped for environmental accidents and disasters. We need "Green Helmets" as a quickly available task force of voluntary experts from various countries comparable to the "Blue Helmets" of the United Nations peace-keeping forces. These experts must be able to be summoned by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on short notice for immediate deployment on site. The United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance, decided on by the UNEP Governing Council in 1991 and now set up in Geneva, must be consistently promoted and expanded with this objective in mind.

All this shows us once again that securing and maintaining peace can be achieved permanently only if it also covers comprehensively the economic, social and environmental spheres; therefore, these are requirements for a kind of security council as well.

(Mr. Töpfer, Germany)

The Conference in Rio was an important milestone for us. However, we shall be able to consolidate the success of this event only if, by means of a continuing, dynamic process backed up by world-wide solidarity and joint action in global partnership, we secure the basic conditions for sustainable development and thus for the survival of humanity on this planet.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.